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CHIRAC STRATEGY :

Deliberate Plans To Restrict Kanaks

South Pacific Forum nations and leaders of the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS) have been working with the UN Decolonisation Committee since last December to forge a negotiated independence in Kanaky.

But the French government of conservative Prime Minister Jacques Chirac has refused to recognise the legal processes of the UN, and is currently doing all it can to destroy the government framework in Kanaky established under the Socialist Party's Fabius plan.

FRENCH REJECT KANAK NEGOTIATIONS

In mid-April, Overseas Territories Minister Bernard Pons will present a bill to the French National Assembly, to authorise a referendum on the future of the French-controlled territory. The French government has rejected offers of negotiations by Kanak leaders (none of the three Presidents of FLNKS-controlled regions got to meet with Pons during his visit to Kanaky, while he met with anti-independence leaders). Instead, it is likely that the referendum, scheduled for July, will more or less ask 'Do you want to be part of France?' - and without electoral reform, the minority Kanak population cannot express their desire for independence.

REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS SLASHED

In the lead up to the July referendum, the Chirac government has moved to dismantle elements of regional government established by the Socialist Party in 1985 - even though the Socialist Party's program only allowed for 'independence in association' and not full self-determination.

By granting new powers to the French High Commissioner, the economic programs of the FLNKS-controlled regions outside Noumea have been slashed. At the same time, funds are still being granted to settler-dominated Noumea (even for construction of new tourist facilities and an 18-hole golf course!)

PURGE OF KANAKS & SYMPATHISERS

Kanaks have been sacked from the media, and government offices (such as the Office for Development, the Office for Land Purchase and Redistribution and the Education Department). The directors of all these offices have been sacked, together with the heads of the teacher-training institute, the electricity authority and AIRCAL (the internal air service). European sympathisers and Socialist party appointees have also been purged.

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EAST TIMOR "ELECTIONS" :

A Public Relations Exercise

On April 23 1987, general elections will be held in Indonesia, including East Timor, which Indonesia claims as its 27th province. Strictly speaking, elections in East Timor are illegal by international standards as the United Nations does not recognise East Timor as part of Indonesia. However the East Timorese population has no choice but to cooperate as anyone refusing to vote will be branded as Fretilin, ie. an enemy of the Indonesian state.

NO TIMORESE PARTY

Since it came to power in 1966, the Suharto regime has held three elections, in 1971, 1977 and 1982. No election was held in East Timor in 1977 although it had by then been forcibly annexed (in 1975) and officially 'integrated' (in 1976). The first Indonesian election in East Timor was held in 1982 when the Government Golkar party 'won' 99% of the vote and all four seats in the national parliament - hardly a surprising outcome in view of the fact that the East Timorese were instructed to vote for Golkar. Independence was not, of course, an electoral option for voters and no Timorese party was permitted to exist, let alone participate. This remains the case in 1987.

'FESTIVAL OF DEMOCRACY'

In the run-up to these elections, which President Suharto has unashamedly labelled 'a festival of democracy', Timorese people throughout the island are being assembled to listen to information and instructions from government officials on how to vote and who to vote for. Special voting procedures are in force for East Timor and West Papua, which do not apply in any of the other 25 provinces. In East Timor sixty two committees have been set up and the authorities have announced that 357,754 people are entitled to vote.

CYNICAL PROCESS

Candidates for the three parties in East Timor have been announced. Heading the Golkar party list is none other than Dr Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, Indonesia's Foreign Minister, who is not only not an East Timorese but is the man most active in defending Indonesia's oppression of East Timor in world forums! Nothing more clearly illustrates how totally cynical and alien these elections are for the East Timorese people who have nothing either ideologically or historically in common with any of the Indonesian parties contesting the election. Candidates running for the other two parties, the Democratic Party and the Development Party (Muslim), are also Indonesians, not East Timorese. Golkar will undoubtedly win comfortably in East Timor, as it will in Indonesia itself, because of its overwhelming monopoly of resources and clever manipulation of the electoral process.

PUBLIC RELATIONS VALUE

While the elections should be seen and condemned for what they are - namely a totally unrepresentative and heavily orchestrated, coercive piece of theatre, their importance in public relations terms should not be underestimated.

ELECTIONS AS 'PROOF'

As with the 1982 elections, Indonesia intends to use these illegal elections as proof to the international community that the East Timorese have accepted integration by the mere fact that they took part (under duress) in the voting. To the public at large, unaware of the fact that no East Timorese party is permitted to participate (or exist), unaware that Indonesia has over 20,000 troops in East Timor to crush any Fretilin challenge, and unaware of the heavy Government manipulation of the election machinery, a clear result in favour of the Indonesian Government can seem persuasive evidence in support of Indonesia's claims.

UN REFUSES INIVTATION

To the credit of the United Nations, however, the world body has refused an invitation by Indonesia to observe the elections. The fact of this refusal should be widely publicised. It clearly demonstrates that the UN does not want to countenance in any way the 'farce of democracy' Indonesia will present to the world in the days following April 23.

Pat Walsh